

January 16, 2019

The Honorable Scott Tipton
United States House of Representatives
218 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Tipton:

On behalf of the nearly 6 million Farm Bureau member families across the United States, I commend you for your leadership in the development of the Water Rights Protection Act, which would prevent attempts by federal land management agencies to circumvent long-standing state water law. Farm Bureau has a strong interest in ensuring that the longstanding relationship between federal land management agencies and public land ranchers is maintained.

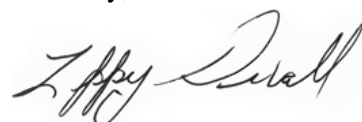
In the past, the U.S. Forest Service and other federal agencies have attempted to require privately owned businesses to surrender long-held water rights – which they have paid for and developed – as a condition of receiving renewals in their special use permits that allow them to operate on public land. This kind of power grab by the federal government violates federal and state law and would ultimately upset water allocation systems and private property rights on which western economies have been built.

The most valuable resource for every farmer and rancher in America is water. American farmers and ranchers are the backbone of America, providing food, feed, fuel and fiber for the nation and the world. In addition to input costs, labor costs, and market prices, they rely on the well-established system of private property and water rights when making business decisions. Unfortunately, it seems that these federal tactics have little to do with conservation and everything to do with big government and control.

This legislation represents an important and necessary step in protecting private property rights and upholding long-established water law by prohibiting federal agencies from extorting water rights through the use of permits, leases and other land management arrangements. Further, the legislation recognizes the ability of states to confer water rights, and acknowledges that the federal government will respect those lawfully acquired rights, assuring that valid holders of water rights under state law cannot have those rights diminished or otherwise jeopardized by assertions of rights by federal agencies when those assertions have no basis in federal or state law.

We commend you for your leadership, and look forward to continuing to work with you and the House Natural Resources Committee in securing enactment of this critically important legislation.

Sincerely,



Zippy Duvall
President